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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000149

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/24/2027
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: [TURKEY](#): DEMOCRATIC LEFT PARTY'S ZEKI SEZER: WHOLE
LOTTA NUTHIN GOIN' ON

REF: A. 06 ANKARA 6370

[1](#)B. 05 ANKARA 6586

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner for Reasons 1.4(b),
(d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with the chairman of the Democratic Left Party (DSP), heir to Bulent Ecevit, Zeki Sezer. DSP has played an historically important role in Turkey (ref A), but won less than two percent in the 2002 elections. It continues to poll poorly and would only cross the 10 percent election threshold if it succeeded in forming an electoral alliance with a number of other small parties -- no small feat, given the lack of direction and leadership on the left, including in the DSP. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Zeki Sezer is a quiet, polite, gentlemanly politician, who appears to take a passive approach to leadership, expecting that voters will simply come to understand DSP's superiority and flock to it on their own, even though it is a pro-EU party in EU-hostile times. Sezer speaks in indirect ways; his oft-repeated buzzwords "dialogue and reconciliation" were code for "electoral alliance," for example, as if it were beneath him to discuss electoral thresholds.

[1](#)3. (C) Sezer indicated that DSP is negotiating with other parties to try to create a coalition of small parties that together could cross the country's 10 percent threshold to enter parliament. Such an alliance would be a temporary merger of convenience. It would not be limited to Turkey's (few) left-wing parties, but would be "open to anyone who values democracy and secularism." He claimed that this project might come together in the next month or two.

[1](#)4. (C) Sezer made a number of dubious claims for his party, asserting that DSP was the party campaigning the most throughout Turkey and was the only party that could inspire wintertime turn-out (parliamentary elections are expected next fall). He said that the majority of 2002's 11 million abstentions had been DSP voters despairing of Ecevit's frailty and unable to vote for either the Republican People's Party (CHP) or Justice and Development Party (AKP); now the party was getting back in touch with these people. He claimed that DSP had "new and positive policies," and that the number of people recognizing this (and the positive economic role played by DSP when it was in charge in 1999) was increasing. Polls show, he claimed, that DSP is the only party on the rise; "I'm talking about real polls here, not

made-up ones."

15. (C) COMMENT. DSP won 22 percent of the vote and led the government after the 1999 elections, but by 2002, hit hard by corruption allegations, economic shocks, and Bulent Ecevit's ineffective governance and frailty, it was virtually wiped from the political landscape. It stands no chance of recapturing that former glory in this year's elections. DSP shows no signs of overcoming its aversion to grassroots party building (ref B), and Sezer's optimism that voters will just come back appears unfounded this time round. DSP lacks charismatic leadership and an updated agenda that resonates with the Turkish public. Its traditional message may still sound reassuring to voters disenchanted with CHP and AKP, but given the lethargic DSP's small chance of meeting the 10% threshold, voters may forsake the center-left to throw in with a more promising party. Should DSP succeed in forging a temporary alliance, for example with an assortment of other small parties like Anavatan, Social Democratic People's Party, Liberal Democrat Party, and others, it would offer voters an option on the otherwise barren political left. END COMMENT.

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